Government of South Australia
Department for Correctional Services

Official Visitors Scheme

Candidate Information Pack

Department for Correctional Services

Purpose of this outline

This Candidate Information Pack has been prepared to help prospective applicants understand the practical nature of the Official Visitor role before applying. It should be read together with the recruitment advertisement and relevant Official Visitor role description.

1. About this information pack

- The Official Visitor role is an independent statutory appointment, not an employment role with DCS.
- The role involves visiting correctional institutions, speaking with prisoners, receiving and considering complaints, keeping records and preparing reports or recommendations.

2. What is an Official Visitor?

Independent statutory appointment

Official Visitors are independent statutory appointees appointed by the Governor under the *Correctional Services Act 1982*. They are not employees of DCS and do not have a DCS line manager.

Official Visitors have reporting obligations to the Minister for Correctional Services and exercise their statutory functions independently. DCS provides coordination and administrative support to assist the operation of the Scheme.

What the role involves

Official Visitors visit and inspect correctional institutions, receive complaints from prisoners, advocate for the proper resolution of issues relating to the care, treatment or control of prisoners, and may provide advice or recommendations to the Minister or Chief Executive.

The role requires sound judgement, independence, confidentiality, careful record keeping, clear communication and the ability to engage appropriately with prisoners, correctional staff and other stakeholders.

3. What to expect in practice

Visits and contact with prisoners

Official Visitors are authorised to enter and inspect correctional institutions when exercising their statutory functions. During visits, they may speak privately with prisoners, receive complaints or concerns, observe conditions and follow up relevant matters.

Official Visitors must exercise their functions in a way that, so far as is reasonably practicable, does not adversely affect the good order and security of a correctional institution. The role involves balancing independent access and advocacy with appropriate awareness of correctional operations, security requirements and established processes.

Workload and flexibility

The role is not a rostered employment position. Official Visitors work independently and are expected to manage their own availability, visits, follow-up actions, records and administrative requirements. Some matters may require timely follow-up, and occasional travel to metropolitan or regional correctional institutions may be required.

Reporting

Official Visitors have reporting obligations to the Minister for Correctional Services under the Correctional Services Act 1982. An Official Visitor may provide a report to the Minister at any time about any matter arising from the performance of their functions. Official Visitors must also provide an annual report to the Minister by 31 October each year about their work during the previous financial year.

Reports provided under these provisions may be tabled in Parliament. If a report includes recommendations about the management of a correctional institution or improving the care, treatment or control of prisoners, a further report may be required outlining action taken or proposed in response to those recommendations.

To support these reporting obligations, Official Visitors are expected to maintain appropriate records of visits, inspections, interviews, complaints, issues raised and actions taken.

4. Independence, support and working arrangements

Independence

Official Visitors exercise their statutory functions independently. DCS does not direct how Official Visitors assess complaints, conduct inspections or form recommendations.

DCS support

DCS provides coordination and administrative support for the Scheme. This may include assistance with induction arrangements, site access, administrative enquiries, payment processing and general coordination between Official Visitors and correctional institutions.

Official Visitors are expected to liaise appropriately with other Official Visitors, prison General Managers, DCS staff and prisoners while maintaining their statutory independence.

5. Conflicts of interest

Official Visitors must be able to exercise their functions independently and without an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

A conflict of interest may arise where an Official Visitor's personal, professional, financial or other interests could affect, or be perceived to affect, their ability to perform the role impartially.

Examples may include knowing a prisoner at a correctional institution, such as a family member, having a personal, professional or financial interest connected to a correctional institution, or operating a business or providing services that may intersect with prisoners, correctional institutions or DCS.

Actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest must be disclosed via a report to the Minister for Correctional Services.

A conflict does not necessarily prevent a person from being appointed or continuing in the role. Depending on the circumstances, a conflict may be managed through an agreed strategy. For example, if an Official Visitor knows a prisoner at a particular correctional institution, they may be asked not to attend that site or not to deal with matters involving that person.

The Minister, supported by DCS where appropriate, will work with the Official Visitor to consider whether a conflict can be managed and what arrangements may be required.

6. Practical resources

Official Visitors should be comfortable working independently and managing their own records, correspondence and administration. DCS will provide relevant administrative information and support, however the role is not supported in the same way as a DCS employee position.

Further information about practical resources, including email access, site access, induction material and administrative support, will be provided to successful applicants as part of the appointment and onboarding process.

7. Records

Official Visitors are responsible for creating and maintaining records relating to the performance of their statutory functions. This may include records of site visits, inspections, prisoner complaints or concerns, interviews, follow-up actions, correspondence, reports and recommendations.

Under the *State Records Act 1997*, Official Visitors are considered a separate agency for record-keeping purposes. This means each Official Visitor is responsible for managing records created or received in the course of their statutory functions during their appointment, including ensuring records are accurate, secure, confidential and able to be retrieved when required. DCS cannot alter or review the content of Official Visitor records.

Official Visitors are provided with a SA Government email account for secure communication. This account can be accessed through Outlook web using the Official Visitor's own device. Official Visitors are not issued with DCS laptops or mobile phones. When attending a correctional institution, Official Visitors may be provided with a workspace and access to a computer for the duration of the visit, if required.

Records created or received by Official Visitors may be subject to public sector records management requirements under the *State Records Act 1997*, including retention and disposal obligations. Successful applicants will receive further guidance about record-keeping expectations, storage, confidentiality, retention and disposal as part of induction and onboarding.

8. Freedom of Information

Applicants should be aware that each Official Visitor is considered a separate agency under the *Freedom of Information Act 1991* for records relating to their Official Visitor functions. This means an Official Visitor may be responsible, as the principal officer of that agency, for managing any freedom of information obligations that arise in relation to records they create or receive in the course of the role.

Information about individual cases disclosed to an Official Visitor is subject to confidentiality protections under the *Correctional Services Act 1982*. However, these protections do not operate as a general exemption from the Freedom of Information Act 1991 for all Official Visitor records. Other records may need to be searched, reviewed or assessed if required under applicable information access processes.

Successful applicants will receive further guidance about records management, confidentiality and information handling requirements.

9. Payment and expenses

Official Visitor remuneration and allowances are determined by the South Australian Remuneration Tribunal. Details of current remuneration and expense arrangements will be provided as part of the recruitment and onboarding process.

Official Visitors are responsible for submitting timesheets or payment claims in accordance with the process advised by DCS. Applicants should be comfortable managing basic administrative requirements associated with payment and expense claims.

10. Insurance and safety

Successful applicants will receive further information about insurance, safety and incident reporting arrangements. Official Visitors must comply with site safety and security requirements when attending correctional institutions.

11. Induction and onboarding

After appointment, Official Visitors will be provided with information to support commencement in the role. This may include site access and induction arrangements, provision of information about administrative processes and policies as well as introductions to relevant DCS contacts and other Official Visitors.

Induction may involve DCS induction requirements, local site induction processes and other training or briefing material needed to safely and effectively perform the role.

12. Is this role right for me?

This role may suit people with experience in complaints management, advocacy, healthcare, mental health, social work, disability services, legal practice, public administration, inspection, oversight or review functions.

Applicants should be comfortable working independently, exercising sound judgement, maintaining confidentiality, keeping accurate records, preparing written material and engaging respectfully with prisoners, DCS staff and other stakeholders.

Applicants should also consider whether they are comfortable visiting correctional institutions, dealing with sensitive information, managing administrative tasks such as invoicing and records, and working without day-to-day supervision.